



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1342 Vienna, 28 October 2021**

#### **EU Statement in response to the Current Issue on “Democracy and Democratic Elections in the OSCE region” raised by the US**

1. We welcome the fact that US has raised this issue, giving us the opportunity to exchange views on Democracy, a principle that lies at the heart of the foundation of both the EU and the OSCE. Free, fair, inclusive, periodic and genuine elections, transparent, accountable institutions, rule of law, pluralism, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, free civil society, independent media, gender equality, inclusiveness and non-discrimination, - the safeguards of democracy - require constant commitment and vigilance of all pS. The OSCE is a valuable platform for raising these issues and we welcome the Draft Declaration on Democracy tabled by the Swedish CiO, reaffirming our commitment to promote and support democracy worldwide.
2. We are proud of the EU's positive influence in fostering democratic values across the region, in line with the ambitious objectives put forward in the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy. Furthermore, the European Democracy Action Plan sets out measures to promote free and fair elections, strengthen media freedom and pluralism, and counter disinformation.
3. Across the world, we are scaling up our financial and political support for those who promote democratic participation and inclusion, ensure institutional checks and balances, and hold decision makers to account. We are building alliances with all those committed to upholding universal rights and freedoms, with democratic governments but also with international organisations, civil society organisations, parliaments, political parties, independent media, human rights defenders and activists. The EU



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election observation missions remain an integral part of our commitment to assisting our partners across the world when it comes to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

4. OSCE/ODIHR plays a fundamental role in preserving democratic standards in the OSCE region, in particular when it comes to its election observation activities. Over the past 30 years, ODIHR has deployed over 400 election observation missions across the OSCE region. We take this opportunity to express our full support for the election monitoring carried out by ODIHR, together with the OSCE PA, as a valuable tool for the promotion of democratisation and respect for human rights across our region. We also underline the importance of ODIHR's role in securing a platform for civil society representatives and human rights defenders to interact with national authorities, ensuring their voices are heard.
5. The essential role of civic activists and human rights defenders is firmly rooted in the OSCE documents. Regrettably, the space for civil society continues to shrink across the OSCE region and courageous individuals frequently find themselves to be the target of oppression and persecution. These risks increase in situations of conflict, in countries where the judiciary does not enjoy independence and in situations where law enforcement personnel lack sufficient training.
6. The EU will continue to call on all participating States to live up to their international human rights obligations and OSCE commitments, as well as to speak up against the shrinking space, intimidation and reprisals against civil society and human rights defenders. Looking ahead, we encourage all participating States to further strengthen their engagement with the OSCE autonomous institutions as an invaluable source of guidance and support in implementing our commitments and safeguarding democracy.



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Democracy cannot be taken for granted; it needs to be nurtured and protected by each and every one of us.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.